

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 082 402

EC 052 602

AUTHOR Murphy, Lois B.; Leeper, Ethel M.
TITLE Preparing for Change. Caring for Children, Number Three.
INSTITUTION Child Development Services Bureau (DHEW/OCD), Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY Children's Hospital of the District of Columbia, Washington, D.C.; Menninger Foundation, Topeka, Kans.; National Inst. of Mental Health (DHEW), Rockville, Md.
REPORT NO DHEW-OCD-73-1028
PUB DATE 73
NOTE 24p.
AVAILABLE FROM Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402 (\$0.45)
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Child Care Centers; Child Care Occupations; *Early Childhood Education; *Emotional Adjustment; *Guidelines; *Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

The booklet is the third in a series on the ways that child care centers can contribute to the healthy growth, and development of preschool children, and focused on is helping the child adapt to change. The change of starting school is viewed in terms of the mother's role, the difficulty of leaving mother behind, feelings of the first day, getting acquainted, and the need for special help. Another change is reported to be a teacher's absence, and preparation is recommended for short absences or a new teacher. Among the big events in a child's life which are said to be eased by a teacher's help are a new baby, moving, going to the hospital, and getting shots. Changes in schedule such as having to wait, bad weather, visitors, trips, and special days are other changes seen to require a child's adjustment. Shifts in activities such as from active to quiet play, at lunch and naptime, arriving and departing, and Monday morning are seen to often be difficult times. Teachers are encouraged to help the child through experiences of sadness and grief such as when a mother goes to the hospital, divorce and separation, prison, or moving to a different foster home. If a child has been absent, help is recommended when he returns to the center in order to become an accepted group member again. (For other booklets in the series see EC 052 600, EC 052 601, EC 052 603 and EC 052 604).

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caring for children—number three

**PREPARING
FOR
CHANGE**

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DHEW Publication No. (OCD) 73-1028

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caring for children—number three

PREPARING FOR CHANGE

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preface

The influence of a good child care center is not limited to the children who are cared for, the staff itself, or the mothers who participate. Older and younger brothers and sisters, friends, neighbors, volunteers may all gain from changes brought about by the child care center. In some instances, the neighborhood is brightened up, inspired by the attractiveness of the center, and pride emerges to spark new efforts. School teachers and principals, ministers, and local agencies also grow more helpful, more interested in children.

This comes from the friendliness of the center staff to the whole family and to the neighbors. It also comes from the quality of every aspect of the child care center—the cheerful setting, the good food, the well-organized space for activity, the children's progress in learning and self-control, the experience of helping to improve the center itself and the neighborhood, the resulting good feelings, and a contagious sense of progress.

At one child care center on a dirt road full of deep ruts and holes, with some adjacent yards full of junk and neighboring houses in a run down condition, major changes occurred. The city street department improved the road; the real estate agent repaired and painted nearby houses while resident owners painted their own; and volunteers from the police department cleaned up the junk. Yards bare and full of scraggly weeds were seeded and made neat. It all takes effort, but the response releases new energy.

Thus child care centers have the opportunity of providing massive help for the nation's children through contributing to wholesome physical, mental, and social development, and also to an improved environment for the children. The child in a good center all day will receive good food, exercise, and rest to build a healthy body, as well as assistance in correction of physical problems.

Through constant communication with teachers and aides, language is developed, vocabulary is enlarged naturally, thought is stimulated, and a healthy self-concept evolves. Use of toys and other play and work materials involves exercise and development of sensory-motor skills, along with many concepts of color, size, shape, weight, balance, structure, and design. Stories and songs encourage integration of feelings, action, and ideas, while developing imagination.

Spontaneous play in the housekeeping corner or with blocks allows the child to play out his observations of the family and the community. Other children may broaden their ideas and skills through watching and joining in the play.

Neither health, nor adequate mental development, nor constructive social behavior can be guaranteed for the rest of the child's life if the following years do not also meet his needs adequately. But good total development in childhood can provide prerequisites for further growth and can help to prevent the beginnings of retardation, disorganized behavior, early delinquency, and emotional disturbance.

acknowledgments

I owe most to two groups of workers with young children: first, my former colleagues at Sarah Lawrence College, who taught the children at the Sarah Lawrence Nursery School—Evelyn Beyer, long time director of the nursery school, and Marian Gay, Rebekah Shuey, and also colleagues at Bank Street College for Teachers with whom at different times I shared teaching and research experiences. But in addition, I owe much to the directors and teachers of many nursery schools and day care centers across America and around the world. Especially exciting to me were the Basic Education schools of India, initiated by Gandhi and Zakir Hussain; and Bal Ghar in Ahmedabad, India—a unique integration of the best American nursery school concepts, Montessori principles, Basic Education, and some traditional Indian patterns, organized with a special balance of good structure and flexibility that I came to know as Kamalini Sarabhai's genius.

I am equally grateful to the creative staff of the North Topeka Day Care Center—Josephine Nesbitt and Forestine Lewis, who "dreamed up" the center to meet the needs of deprived children in their area; and among the intercultural group of teachers and directors, Sarita Peters, Mary Wilson, Jane Kemp, Connie Garcia, Chris Smith—each of whom had special talents in handling the children, stimulating and supporting their growth. Cecile Anderson has been especially generous in sharing her unique story—techniques, observations of children's favorite stories, and ways of looking at children's constructive-

ness and pride in achievement. Among the volunteers, Lillian Morrow was an inspiration to all of us with her sensitive, skillful, and quietly warm ways, and Carol Rousey contributed expert and helpful assessments of the children's speech and language development.

The leadership of the local OEO director, Robert Harder, and later J. A. Dickinson, stimulated staff, parents and neighbors, Girl Scouts, occupational therapy groups in local hospitals to help paint, plant shrubbery, build outdoor play equipment, provide toys so as to make possible a pleasant and well-furnished environment for learning and for total development. Shirley Norris, director of Kansas State Day Care, Anna Ransom, wise dean of Topeka day care efforts, and Mr. S. Revely, the local realtor who renovated the neighborhood houses for the Center, all gave time, energy, and warm interest to the development of the Center.

I also want to express my appreciation to the responsive mothers whose progress along with that of their children gave me a new understanding of human potentialities in children and adults of all ethnic groups in America and the urgency of making it possible for these to be expressed.

These guidelines were initiated by Dr. Caroline Chandler, former Chief, Children's Mental Health Section, National Institute of Mental Health, and were supported by PHS Grant R12—MH9266, the Menninger Foundation, and Children's Hospital of the District of Columbia. They were prepared under the supervision of Mrs. Franc Balzer, Director of Head Start's Parent and Child Center Program.

Lois B. Murphy, Ph.D.

PREPARING FOR CHANGE

Surprise parties are great fun on special occasions. An unexpected gift is exciting. But human beings, for the most part, prefer their surprises in pleasing little packages. They want their everyday lives to follow a more orderly pattern. When important changes take place, children and adults alike do not want them to come as surprises. They want to know about them in advance so that they can be ready for them.

Much worry among adults can be caused by changes in their life situations. The loss of someone dear, in addition to causing immediate sadness, can cause deep emotional disturbances and even actual pain. Everyone feels butterflies in his stomach when he begins a new job regardless of how skillful he is. The uncertainty of what is expected makes us nervous. Moving into a new house in a new neighborhood may bring on feelings of uneasiness to everyone in the family until we get to know our new neighbors and find our way around.

If adults suffer in so many ways when changes occur in their lives, it is easy to see how upsetting change can be to a young child. His world is so much smaller and his experiences are so limited that even little changes can unsettle him. Most babies will spit out the first spoonful of cereal because the texture and taste are different from the milk they have been accustomed to. Worry about a new teacher can give a shy child an actual stomach ache every morning until he gets to know her. A child may even be angry about moving to a new house or leaving home to start school.

Parents and teacher, however, can help a child get used to new situations by preparing him for them. If the child knows what to expect, he is more likely to accept the change with greater ease.

starting school

Mother's Role—Until they go to school, mother is the most important person in most children's lives. Regardless of what kind of a mother she is, she still represents the small child's world and all that is familiar to him. Leaving mother is the hardest part about going to school. How easily a child adjusts depends in large measure on how well mother has prepared him to take this big step. If he has big brothers or sisters who are proud of going to school, he is more likely to want to go too.

If some children of six are afraid to leave their mothers to go to school, a child of two or three may be terrified during his first days at the child care center. The more mother knows about the center, the more she can prepare her child. Possibly she had been told about the center by a social worker or public health nurse and had never visited it herself. She might be too timid to go alone. It would help relieve her fears if the person who tells her about the center could take the teacher or director of the center to call on the mother.

Meeting the teacher first in familiar surroundings will put the shy mother at ease, but it may take another visit or two before she feels confident enough to visit the center. When she does come, she will want to look through the

rooms and see what kinds of toys are there for her child to play with. The housekeeping center or the phonograph probably may mean more to her than paints or modeling clay. She may be interested in the materials that help teach a child to think, like puzzles and blocks and story books.

If the mother wants to have her child come to the child care center, a date should be fixed for her to bring him for a visit. It is very important for the teacher to explain to mother that everything will be strange to the child, just as it was to her at first. Just a short visit is best in the beginning.

On this first visit teacher can take the child, with his mother, around the center, pointing out objects that probably are familiar, like the cots where he will nap and the make-believe kitchen where he can cook make-believe hot dogs. She can point out how much fun the other children are having. Be sure that mother goes on the tour too, even though she already has seen the center during one of her previous visits. This may be a frightening experience for the shy child, and without his mother's help, he may be too terrified ever to return. If his first visit is relaxed and fun, he is more likely to get used to school quickly.

If he seems to want to join the other children in a game or some activity, teacher can ask, "Would you like to sit in the sand box with the other children for a while? Mommy can sit right here and watch you." Such an invitation should be relaxed, and the child should be allowed to decide for himself. At no time should he feel he is being taken from his mother by force.

Leaving Mother Behind—Terrifying thoughts may race through a child's mind when he sees his mother leaving. What if she forgets where he is?



Mother's lap is a safe haven the first few days.

Maybe she will forget to come back for him. He might never see her again! Words of assurance, like "I'll see you this afternoon, Lamont" or "Have a good time. I will come to get you after lunch" have little effect unless the child has been shown that his mother means what she says.

Mother can do this best by taking the time to stay at the center the first few days with Lamont. She doesn't have to do anything but be there. For most of the first day she may provide a warm lap from which Lamont can view the happenings of the center. Watching from this safe place may be enough for a start.

As Lamont begins to feel at home, he will want to do what the other children are doing and will slip away from mother to join them. He may need to run back ever so often to be sure she is still there. Soon he will become so absorbed in the activities that he will not need mother's presence.

By now mother can cut her visits shorter. After an hour or so she can tell Lamont, "I must go to the store. You stay here and I'll come back for you." Lamont now knows that the child care center is not a place that gobbles up little boys or where mothers desert their children. He knows that all the children go home every evening, and he feels sure his mother will come for him too. It helps if teacher tells mother, "Don't

worry. I'll call you if Lamont needs you or gets too tired."

Pretty soon mother is able to take Lamont to the door and wave goodbye. Lamont enjoys his day at the center, and mother can go off to work or to her responsibilities at home knowing that he is not crying for her.

Some mothers who are too shy to come into the center may not realize that their children are shy too. The teacher who can persuade a mother to stay with her child during the early days is doing everyone a favor, including herself. When a child who is abruptly left at the door spends the day crying for his mother, teacher may have to devote much of her time to comforting the forlorn child, and the entire child care program suffers.

First Day Feelings—The first day at the center is an anxious time for many children. In new surroundings with strange people, the child wants to know what is going to happen to him. He shows this anxiety by different kinds of behavior. One child may be shy and frightened and withdraw as far from the center of things as possible. Another may start to tear around, "casing the joint," so to speak. He is overexcited by the new experience. Still another wants to beat up somebody or pound out his anger on a toy. Some children are especially attracted to certain toys, as a little girl may want to spend the morning rocking a doll she likes very much.

Teacher must take her cue from the child. The shy one may feel safer if teacher takes him by the hand or holds him on her lap; or he may want to keep his distance and just watch. The easily overstimulated child may need help to find a quiet spot away from noise. The vigorous one may need an opportunity for some strenuous activity in the play yard, while the aggressive or angry one may be able to get rid of his anger by hammering on the peg board.

Every newcomer needs special attention from teacher. For that reason it is a good idea to have only a few new children start at a time. If

Teacher's protective arm keeps new experiences from becoming too frightening.

the group of new children is large, they can get the best start if the teacher gets well acquainted with a few first, then adds two or three new ones after the first group is "settled in." If four children start on Monday, by Thursday they might feel enough at home for a few more to start. If the teacher is successful in talking several mothers into staying with their own children during the first days, her problem is lightened for they can help their own children while the teacher concentrates on the other newcomers.

Some child care centers try to include the parents of newcomers in other ways as well. In some centers mothers make plastic aprons for painting or water play, or curtains to make the rooms pretty. One center hires a father carpenter

to make shelves and tables. When the parents are actively interested in the center, the child feels more at home there.

Getting Acquainted—During these first days, warm, thoughtful attention from the teacher helps the newcomer get acquainted with the toys, the other children, and the routine of the center. If the director or teacher aide gets to know the new child first, this makes it easier for her to help him get to know another child. A new friend can be a big help in showing the newcomer around.

Teacher must remember that some children are slow to join new activities. They would rather watch for a while to see how things are done. Others are game for anything and dive





A child who knows his way around the center can help a newcomer feel at home by involving him in play.

right into the thick of the action. The new child should be invited to join in everything, but should not be forced against his will. This will only build up resentment at being pushed around, or even anger against the teacher and the center.

Getting to feel at home includes a sense of belonging. Showing the newcomer his place at the table and his own cubby where he hangs his

At the beginning, some are doers and some are watchers.

coat conveys the idea that he is wanted. The equipment and material may be very strange to a child who has had very little at home. He has probably never seen modeling clay, nor handled a paint brush. If teacher sits down and begins, herself, to play with the clay, it will arouse the child's interest. "You can do this too," says the teacher, handing the child the clay. As he begins



to feel at home, he will enter into more activities on his own and will discover what he can do with materials.

Singing games are often a good way to help a child feel a part of the group. If the teacher takes him by the hand and leads the game, the new child soon will pick up the words and actions. While doing the same thing everyone else is doing, he will lose his self-consciousness. The first songs should be very simple and easy to learn. A song, like "Getting to Know You," may make the child feel welcome.

The new child who is not too shy may enjoy helping the teacher by passing crackers or handing out the napkins. Again, if he is not interested, he should not be pushed into doing anything he doesn't want to do. In a few days he will warm up and want to do little jobs.

Special Help—Each child is a little bit different from every other child. Each comes from a home that is different from every other home. For these reasons, children do not all act the same way when they are faced with the new world of the child care center. While some may enter into the activities with very little strain, others need special help from teacher to feel at home with the other children.

The new child may desperately need a one-to-one relationship while he is getting started. At the same time the teacher must give the other children the attention and affection they need. She cannot let the other children think they are being pushed out for the newcomer. Teacher could use two laps and a dozen hands at a time like this. One way to reassure the other children is to make them a part of helping the new child feel at home. "Pacita, why don't you take Walter by the hand and show him where he can get a drink of water? I will be right here with the other children getting the puzzles out;" or "Carlos, if you will help Scott put the puzzles away, he will know where they go the next time."

The daily routine takes getting used to by the new child. If he has been fortunate enough to live in a well-organized home where meals are eaten at approximately the same time every day and bedtime is the same each night, he can easily move into the swing of life in a child care center. He can choose the toys he wants to play with and can use them in an independent way.

However, there are children from families where life is a helter-skelter existence with meals at any old time, if at all, and bedtime comes when the child falls asleep from exhaustion. This type of child does not know how to use freedom in the child care program. He needs to have an understanding teacher near by to help him use the available materials. This may mean sitting down with him in a quiet corner with some blocks and helping him get the idea that he can make interesting buildings by himself.

A good teacher expects that there will be some children who need a more structured program and greater attention. She therefore plans her program so that the children who are ready to work independently have a choice of interesting things to do on their own while she spends much of her time with the ones who need help.

Gradually with large helpings of attention and illustrations of how to use the materials, the new child will begin to try out his own ideas, to use the material more freely, and begin to choose activities on his own.

The amount of toys in itself may overwhelm a child who has no toys at home. His first response may be one of speechless astonishment. If his home is one where his parents seldom speak to him, he may not even realize that the teacher expects an answer when she addresses him.

There are so many different reactions when a child first goes to the child care center that a teacher must be guided by her own sensitivity in understanding why a certain child responds in the way he does and in knowing how to help him become a contributing member of the group.

when teacher is absent

Short Absences—A three-year-old may not realize it, but teachers are human beings too. They get



Worry about teacher's absence can make a child withdraw from the group.

sick. They have relatives who get sick or die. They take vacations. They attend meetings. Even though the children expect to have teacher at the center every day, there are some days when she cannot be there. This can be an upsetting thing unless the children have been prepared for it.

Like mother at home, teacher is the most important person in the lives of the children while they are at the child care center. She is the one who understands their needs and cares for them. A stranger may not know that when Alicia asks for "gaw," she wants a drink of water, or that Orlando cries when he is tired and needs to rest. For that reason when teacher is gone and a substitute takes over, the children are tense wondering how a stranger can look after them the way their own teacher did.

Children show this tenseness in different ways. Some become scared or angry because teacher has deserted them. Greg and Tommy may show their feelings by picking fights all day, while timid Roxanne may wet her panties. If teacher is sick, a group of children will surely want to play doctor, taking turns being the ailing teacher. Julie may find comfort by pretending to talk to teacher in a long conversation over the toy tele-

phone. Visitors to child care centers have noticed that on days when teacher is absent the children seem more reluctant to see a familiar visitor leave.

When teacher must be absent, it is always best to have a substitute whom the children know and who knows the routine of the center. That way, even though the face is different, the day's pattern is the same, and that, alone, is reassuring to a young child. If teacher will be away only a day or two, possibly a volunteer mother who is acquainted with the ways of the child care center could fill in for teacher. If the substitute is a stranger, it would ease the tension if she visited the center while teacher is still there to get acquainted.

Children will always test the substitute by going beyond the behavior limits set by the regular teacher. A good substitute prepares for this by planning activities that give the children firmer direction in what she expects of them.

New Teacher—Everyone feels more comfortable with old friends. We know exactly what they expect from us and we know how to act with them. This is the way children feel toward the teacher they know well. Regardless of how strict she may be, they understand her rules of behavior and they know what to expect if they break them.

Unfortunately teachers sometimes have to leave in the middle of the year. They may move away, or they may get married, or they may have a baby and have to stay home to take care of it. Whatever the reason, there are times when a new teacher must take over.

This can be an upsetting experience for the children unless they are given ample preparation. They should be told about it well in advance of the actual day of departure. Teacher must tell them again and again that a new teacher will take just as good care of them as she did. The pending change in teacher's life can be the topic of some conversations. If she is moving, she can talk about her new home. "When I leave here, I will live in a tall building and will have to ride in an elevator to get to my home. Remember, we rode in an elevator when we visited the museum?"

The prospect of a new baby offers endless possibilities for conversation. "In a little while I will have to stay at home to wait for a tiny new

baby to come. Then I won't be able to be with you any more because I will have to look after my baby. A nice new teacher will look after you. What will I have to do for him? Yes, Roger, I'll have to give him milk. That's right, Bernadine, I'll have to give him a bath. Juan, do you ever help Mother give your baby sister a bath? I'll bring my new baby to visit you when he is strong enough."

Through such conversations the children get used to the idea that teacher will be leaving. They know she is not leaving just to get away from them, but because she has other responsibilities. While giving the children her reasons for leaving, teacher also must assure them repeatedly that the new teacher will be good to them. If she knows who it will be, so much the better.

"You can remind Miss Thompson to feed Jasper and show her where we keep the food. She may forget in the beginning if she isn't used to taking care of a hamster. She'll have so much to remember at first, you'll have to help her."

"Your new teacher, Miss Thompson, has been teaching children in another child care center. She'll know lots of new songs the children there sing. You'll have to ask her to teach you some."

All this will help the children accept their new teacher. The most desirable plan is for the new teacher to stay at the center for a few days while the old teacher is still there so that she gets the feel of the children's needs and how the old teacher met them. While the children will miss their old teacher, it will be easier for them to transfer their affection to the new one if she is not a complete stranger.

big events in a child's life

New Baby—Every child care center has a fair share of baby brothers and sisters arriving during the year. As teachers and mothers know, such an event usually has some effect on the small child

who, himself, may have been the baby of the family until then. Jealousy is a human emotion that everyone experiences at some time in his life. It is a child's natural response to the tiny stranger who has pushed into his home and stolen his mother's love. Teacher and mother working together can help the child accept the new baby and help him to feel sure that his mother will still take care of him.

It is most important to tell the child that a new baby is on the way and let him help in the preparations for it. He might go with mother to buy a new bathtub for baby and perhaps pick out a rattle for baby to play with. It would be fun for him to break the news to teacher and the other children.



Taking care of a baby doll may help a child accept a new baby in her own family.

Looking forward to the new baby can become the topic of many conversations about what it is like to have a baby in the house. "Wayne's mother is going to have a new baby pretty soon. Have you ever held a little baby, Wayne? Does anyone know how to hold a tiny baby? Karen, will you please get a doll and show us how to hold a baby? That's right, you must put your arm behind its neck and your hand under its back. A baby's bones are soft, and you must handle him gently or you will hurt him."

A visit to the center by a baby brother or sister of one of the other children will help Wayne see up close what a baby looks like. Teacher might encourage the other children who have younger brothers and sisters at home to talk about them—what they play with, the kinds of food they eat, how they move about.

In addition to helping prepare Wayne for the event, teacher must also be alert to any change in Wayne's behavior that would indicate anxiety. A new baby is an unknown quantity to a three-year-old, and he might feel that his world is going to change drastically. If he shows signs of worrying about the coming rival, it might help if teacher talked this over with his mother so that she might offer additional reassurances that she will still take care of him.

Once the baby is here, Wayne is even more likely to show some signs of strain. He may become angry at the newcomer who seems to get all the love at home and, because he knows he cannot hurt the baby, he may take his anger out on the other children at the center. Some children react in the opposite way by becoming lackadaisical and disinterested in activities that once delighted them. Others may revert to babyish ways, sucking their thumbs or wetting their pants. Each child is different, but teacher can expect to find some evidence that the new baby has changed the child's life in some way.

At this time it is important for the child care center to be a steady, unchanging part of the child's life. This is also a time for teacher to be extra attentive, realizing that the child probably is not getting so much attention at home. She can reassure him that his feelings toward the baby are natural. "I know it looks as if your baby sister has taken Mommy away from you, Wayne. Babies need so much care when they are tiny."

"Sometimes you wish Baby Jenny would go away and never come back, don't you?"

"Mothers have enough love for all their children, just as I love all of you children here. Mommy still loves you as well as Jenny."

It might help Wayne to accept his new sister if the mother could bring her to the center for a visit when she is a bit older. Showing off the new baby would focus attention on Wayne and help make up for some he thought he had lost when she arrived.

Moving—The days of one family living in the same town for generation after generation are gone. Society today is constantly on the move seeking better housing in another part of town or a better job in another part of the country. Although everybody may be doing it, it doesn't make the experience any easier for the young child. He can't imagine what a new home could be like. He thinks he will lose his whole world.

The child who is going to move and the one who has just moved have special problems that teachers and mothers can help them handle. As in other kinds of change, preparation smooths the way. Fear of the unknown makes him anxious about leaving his familiar surroundings. It helps if his parents tell him why they must move and describe the things he will like in the new place. It is important to reassure him that mother, father, sisters, brothers, dog, cat, and his bed and toys will go with them. It is easier to accept a change of place if the child feels secure in a warm family relationship that he knows will continue uninterrupted by the move.

Teacher can help too by seeing that the child care center remains an unchanging place while the child's familiar furnishings at home are being packed up. It is a help if mother tells teacher about the new home so that teacher can add her reassurances.

"Nadine, you'll take your own bed and covers and teddy bear to the new house. After lunch today I am going to take a picture of all of you to give to Nadine to hang in her new room so she can remember us."

Leaving teacher is another part of the sad feelings surrounding moving. A picture of teacher helps ease the separation. Teacher might give Nadine her address so she can send her a card from the new city. After Nadine leaves, it might be fun for each child to draw a picture for Nadine which teacher can mail to help her over the first difficult days in the new home.

When a new child enters the child care center, he may not only be adjusting to his new surroundings at the center, but he may be a recent arrival in the neighborhood and be getting used to a new house as well. It is most important that he feels he has people who care about him in this new place. If he can stay close to teacher for a few days—sit on her lap at storytime, get a special “tuck in” at naptime—he will soon begin to feel welcome.

Going to the Hospital—“I’m gonna have a bed that goes up and down, and when my throat hurts a lady in a white dress will give me ice cream, even for breakfast”, Roger told his teacher one morning. Roger was about to have his tonsils out, and his mother had been preparing him for the trip to the hospital. She had told him about the new things he will see, and she had not tried to hide the pain that he will feel. But she assured him that there will be people around to help make his pain better.

Hospitals are not like any other place a child is likely to visit. They are so strange that without knowing a little bit about what a hospital

is like, a child can easily be scared by the experience. How much more sure of himself Roger will be because his mother told him ahead of time what to expect.

If he can take a favorite toy or blanket with him, and if Mommy can spend the night, Roger should come through the experience remembering mostly the funny bed and ice cream for breakfast. While in the hospital he may feel too sick to enjoy either, but the fun things his mother told him about ahead of time probably will be the parts of the hospital experience he will remember.

During the days before a child goes to the hospital, the teacher can reinforce mother’s preparations. For this reason it is extremely important that there be a close relationship between mother and teacher so that teacher knows what is going to happen in a child’s life. Teacher may be able to find a few white jackets and dresses and a couple of toy stethoscopes for playing doctor. Crackers or candy mints become pills that the sick patients can really swallow. A box of brightly colored bandages is just right for patching up hurt arms and legs.



Moving a play house sometimes helps a child play out his fears about moving to a new home.

When Roger comes out of the hospital he may enjoy playing doctor and looking down the throats of his classmates. Games like this help him to act out any anger he may feel toward his mother for taking him to the hospital and the doctor for making his throat sore.

Most doctors and nurses agree that children recover faster if their mothers are with them. This may be impossible for some mothers with large families to look after, but whenever possible it is best if mother sleeps in the hospital with her child. If the child will be in the hospital a long time, possibly mother could stay the first few days until he gets used to the strange place.

Getting Shots—Nobody enjoys being jabbed by a needle. But when we are old enough to understand why the inoculation is necessary and what greater discomfort it is protecting us from, the prick of the needle does not seem so bad. Even a young child may be able to suffer through a shot



Fear of the shot he is about to get may be lessened if the child is told that the inoculation will help keep him well.

without crying if he knows that it will help to keep him well. Disposable syringes (without needles, of course) left from the last immunization clinic are fun for giving make-believe shots and helping the children get ready for the real thing. When shots are over, giving pretend shots to each other helps the children get rid of any feelings of anger.

Teacher must be sure the children know what is going to happen to them. She must explain that the shot will keep them from getting sick and having to stay in bed. A lollipop reward when the shot is over also helps keep the tears back.

changes in schedule

Having to Wait—Patience is a trait we must learn as we grow up. A hungry baby becomes angry if he has to wait a few minutes for his milk to heat. In a few months he comes to understand that when mother begins certain preparations, the milk will come soon, and this helps him learn to wait.

In a child care center there are also times when the children must wait. If they know that lunch will be a half hour late because the stove had to be repaired or that teacher will be two hours late because she had to see the dentist, they are able to wait more patiently.

Teacher can help children learn to wait by always giving them good reasons for it. "Martin, you must wait until Joe is finished with the toilet. I can't let you shove him off."

It is sometimes a good idea to change the day's routine so that the children do not become too dependent on a rigid schedule. Eating outdoors on a nice day offers the fun of a picnic and also varies the routine. The children have to wait longer for their food because it must be carried farther. Learning to take small changes in stride

helps them to get used to bigger changes when they occur.

Weather—"Rain, rain, go away. Come again some other day. Little Johnny wants to play."

Children have chanted this wish for generations. As any teacher knows, there is nothing like a rainy day to upset routines and turn active

children into unruly ones. Growing muscles protest if they are forced to remain still too long. The children grow restless and irritable, and a normally well-organized child care center may be thrown into chaos on a rainy day.

Teacher must have special rainy day activities to take the place of strenuous outdoor play. Exercise songs like "The Grand Old Duke of York" or "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes"



An occasional snack outdoors changes the routine so that the children learn to accept other changes in schedule without becoming upset.

are for flexing knees and elbows, and a game like "Cat and Mouse" helps take the kinks out of muscles that have been sitting still too long. Remember to slow down the tempo for three- and four-year-olds.

A rainy day is a good time to introduce new materials. The wise teacher keeps some toys back for such a time when the children's interest is lagging. If all the materials are put out the first day, the children may become bored with them after awhile.

"Just look at all the things I have here to make a grocery store," says teacher, putting make-believe packages of food and play money on the table. The children eagerly put their imaginations to work creating a store with clerks and customers, and the teacher has forestalled a hectic afternoon.

A rainy day is a good time to talk about why trees, flowers, animals, and people need rain to live. "What would happen if it didn't rain anymore? That's right, Iris, the flowers would die. Everything would dry up and die."

Extremely hot days often require another change in schedule. Hot sweaty children quickly become cross. This is the time when play with a sprinkler or wading pool is needed. Perhaps teacher can take the children to a pool in the park. This is also a day for quieter activities to keep the children from becoming overheated.

Visitors—At home or in school visitors always cause some change in routine. They may be fun to have, but their presence is bound to have some effect on everybody.

Visitors are an important part of a good child care program. The visit of an unfamiliar person with interesting things to talk about breaks the monotony of the same activities day after day. When children have new experiences, they are stimulated to learn.

Sometimes visitors, like policemen or nurses, come to the center to talk with the children about the kind of work they do. Other times visitors might just want to see what happens in a child care center because they are interested in young children. Whatever the reason for the visit, things will go more smoothly if the children know about it ahead of time.

"Dr. Wallace will spend some time getting to know us today," teacher tells the children be-

fore Dr. Wallace arrives. "When babies and little children are sick he takes care of them and makes them well again. He wants to see what we do here all day."

After Dr. Wallace arrives there will be a few children who will be distracted from what they are doing and will have to get closer to him. Teacher would be wise to let them talk with him rather than try to shoo them back to their places. If one child seems particularly interested in Dr. Wallace, teacher might suggest some way to involve that child without disturbing the others. "Rhonda," she might say, "why don't you take Dr. Wallace to the housekeeping corner and show him where we wash our toy dishes."

If many children swarm over a guest in an effort to sit close, teacher might help them to get settled with words like, "Dr. Wallace wants to get acquainted with all of you. He'll sit here at the end of the table, and you can gather around the table so he can see all of you." With this arrangement the children can understand that they will have a chance to talk with the guest and need not compete with one another for his attention.

When it is time for Dr. Wallace to leave, he should prepare the children in some way. "One more question, then I must go see some sick children in my office." Being told that the visit is about over helps the children to accept the guest's actual departure and to move on to some other activity.

Trips—Visiting different places in the community to see things first hand is one of the best ways for children to learn about the world around them. An hour spent in a fire station with a chance to try on a real fireman's hat and maybe sit on the high seat of the hook and ladder is an experience that a young child will remember all his life. Trips to all sorts of places—the neighborhood supermarket, the police department, the zoo, a farm, a department store—have a very important part in a child care program.

Trips have one drawback, however, that the teacher must know about and try to avoid. On the day of the trip the normal pattern of activities is interrupted. Excitement runs high both before and during the trip. A normally excitable child can go to pieces in the course of the day.

Teacher's best hope for avoiding trouble is to be sure the children know when and where they are going and what they will see when they get there. "After our nap today we are going to a bakery where they make bread and cakes. It's not far away, so we will walk together. Remember, we must all stick very close together, for we don't want any children to get lost. Each of us will hold hands with our partner, and don't forget, when we get to the street, we always stop and wait for the green light."

Or: "When you come tomorrow you will probably see a big orange bus parked outside. That bus is going to take us out in the country to see a farm where vegetables grow. There are proper ways to behave on the bus so that the driver can keep his mind on the other cars on the road. We must all sit quietly and not run around or throw things. After the bus gets moving, we can sing some of our songs for the driver."

Teacher must also keep many practical things in mind while planning a trip. She must provide for lunch or a snack if the trip will last that long. She must be sure there are toilet facilities along the way and at the destination. She must be alert to signs of fatigue and arrange a rest stop if necessary. Good planning will make outings an enjoyable part of child care.

Special Days—School teachers have long recognized that the two most disorganized times of the year are just before Christmas and just before summer vacation. Excitement builds up day by day as the children look forward to these special occasions.

Christmas particularly can be a trying time for a teacher in a child care center unless she keeps control of her program and doesn't allow herself to be swamped by Christmas spirit. This is the time of year that many civic groups want to give parties or bring gifts to the children in the center. There is nothing wrong with Christmas parties, Santa, and gifts, but too many parties and visitors in a short period of time may be too exciting for some high-strung children. They can enjoy a party now and then, but they need some of the familiar routine to hang on to as well.

If teacher thinks there is danger of too many Christmas treats, she might suggest, for instance, that the Girl Scouts save their party until

Valentine's Day because there are no more days left for another Christmas party. Or how about choosing a time toward the end of January when days are bleak and cold in many places and having a "Sunshine Party?" Most civic groups will understand teacher's predicament and will agree to postpone their treat to a time when the children need it more.

Besides Christmas there are other special days that might get out of hand unless teacher keeps close watch for signs of overstimulation and fatigue. Getting the rooms decorated for Halloween and making favors for a party may excite some children enough to stir up wild behavior. The prospect of "Happy Birthday" being sung just to him may worry a child until he wets his pants.

While guarding against too many changes in the regular schedule, teacher must remember that "variety is the spice of life." Children become bored if life in the center becomes humdrum and monotonous. If every day they look forward to doing exactly what they did the day before, children will stop learning. They need a certain amount of newness to keep their minds alert and to challenge their imaginations. They need to learn how to meet change in their lives without going to pieces. What teacher needs is a balance of newness and familiarity to keep children stimulated, but not overly stimulated to the point of exhaustion.

shifts in activities

Active to Quiet Play—Children are not born with automatic gears that move from high to low immediately when it is time to change to another activity. Sometimes it takes a child a few minutes to stop what he is doing and shift his attention to something else. This may be a difficult time in the child care center unless teacher prepares the children for the next activity.

"Finish your sand cakes now. In a few minutes we will go inside for lunch." Or teacher can say: "Now one more time of 'Farmer in the Dell' then we will get out the paints and draw some pictures." The warning gives the children a moment to adjust to the idea of shifting to another activity.

Some children find it more difficult to get interested in something new and dislike leaving something they are enjoying. Sonja may find security in an organized game that everyone does together but may feel at loose ends during free play because she has never been used to choosing what she wants to do from a plentiful supply of materials. She holds back and begs for "just one more time," delaying the time when she will have to make up her mind for herself. Teacher can help her shift into the new activity by taking her by the hand and showing her how to mix the paints, then painting a bit to give her some ideas of what she can draw. The more a child feels at ease with a number of different activities, the easier it becomes for him to shift from one to the other.

Lunch and Naptime—When the children have been playing hard it is often difficult for them to calm down enough to sit quietly and eat a good lunch. Teacher should give them warning first that they should finish what they are doing because it is about time for lunch. As the children show they are ready to eat, teacher can send them by twos or threes to wash their hands and sit at the table. This helps prevent the last minute rush for the washstand.

If the children seem particularly restless before lunch, a song or two may help them relax and get ready to eat. Songs also are helpful before naps. In fact many teachers find that a song at the right time keeps things from becoming hectic. On days when the children seem particularly out of sorts, possibly because teacher is absent or because of a new child in the group, singing helps bring the group together. While the children are singing they relax and focus their attention on the teacher. When the song is over, they are ready to listen to what she has to say and follow her into the next activity, whether it is lunch, nap, or something else.

Hellos and Goodbyes—"Good morning, Charlene. My, you look pretty this morning. Oh, there's

Bobby. He looks as if he could fight a bear. Are you cross this morning, Bobby? Perhaps you'd like to go after this punching ball. Hello, Daryl. You did surprise me creeping up from behind like that. And Betsy, you have on new shoes, haven't you?"

For each child teacher has a different greeting, calling him by name as she speaks to him. No one enters the child care center without a personal "hello" meant just for him.

At the end of the day, teacher is just as careful to say goodbye to each child individually. "Your Dad is here now, Orlando. I'll see you tomorrow. Goodbye, Josephine, have a good night's sleep. Be sure you tell Mommy about that bandage on your finger, David. You can tell her how you scratched it and we washed it. Maria, don't you want to take your drawing home and show it to Mommy?" These personal farewells, offered in a relaxed manner help the child move from the child care center to his home.

Children do not always move as fast as adults would like them to, and teachers are very busy at the beginning and end of the day. Teachers must guard against the tendency to hurry children on their way. If a mother is waiting and a child is slow getting his coat on, it is a temptation to urge, "Hurry up, Dan, Mommy's waiting. You can talk to Jean tomorrow." If teacher makes arrivals and departures unhurried and friendly, the child is more likely to feel welcome when he arrives and will not think teacher is glad to get rid of him when he leaves.

Monday Morning—Settling down on Monday morning after a weekend at home may be a particularly difficult time for some children. Some may have had an unusually active weekend and come back to the center flushed with excitement. Others may have been frustrated at home where they do not receive the attention or encouragement they do at the child care center. Often life at home in a large family is disorganized and the child is tired when he comes to school on Monday morning. One practice that has been successful in some centers is to devote the first hour on Monday morning to helping the children readjust to the child care center. Teachers do not push them into organized activity, but allow the children to find their own way back to the routine by talking with the teacher about their weekend, ex-

changing tidbits with other children, rediscovering the toys, and generally becoming used to the

spirit of fun and cooperation that pervades the child care center.



Children sometimes need a special welcome on Mondays after a weekend at home.



sadness and grief

Mother Goes to the Hospital—Leaving mother is always difficult for a child. She is his mainstay, the person who knows most about him. When mother gets sick and has to go to the hospital, the child naturally worries that there will be no one to look after him.

If mother knows ahead of time when she will enter the hospital, she can help the child face her departure when it happens. If there is to be a baby sitter, she should arrange for the sitter to come a few days ahead to get acquainted with the family and its routines. She certainly should explain to the child that she is going to the hospital to get well, and when she comes home, she will take care of him again. While she is gone, she explains, Daddy, or Grandma, or Aunt Gertrude, or Mrs. Newman next door will look after him.

Again, the teacher in the child care center can help prepare the child for mother to be away. If she knows that mother must go to the hospital, she can help an anxious child by letting him know that she realizes he is worried, and that it is natural to worry about mother. She can add that mother will get better in the hospital and will come home then. During such a frightening period in a child's life, it helps if teacher keeps him close by her to keep him from feeling alone and neglected. Teacher can accept some change in behavior, perhaps thumb sucking, or daydreaming while worrying about mother, or playing out mother-goes-to-the-hospital. If teacher helps him to get interested in satisfying activities, it will help the child over this time of trouble.

When a child is sad about the loss of someone or something he loves, he needs special attention from teacher to help him accept what he cannot change.

Death—Ralph came to school and viciously kicked the blocks all over the room. He pushed everyone who came near him. Anyone could tell he was angry, but he, himself, couldn't tell them what he was angry about. His teacher, Miss Allen, knew that his grandfather, who was the only man that Ralph knew well, had just died. Ralph never shed a tear, and unknowing people thought he didn't really care. Miss Allen knew differently. She understood that sometimes children (and adults) cannot bring themselves to cry or talk about the things that hurt them most. But they hold them deep inside, and the pain makes them do things they wouldn't ordinarily do.

When death comes to a person a child loves dearly, it causes mixed feelings. Of course Ralph is sad because he won't see his grandfather again. But mingled with the sadness is anger that Grandpa has gone off and left Ralph. It does no good to sit Ralph down and give him a sermon on life and death. Far better is to understand his feelings and help him to face the fact of his grandfather's death.

Miss Allen wisely gave Ralph an opportunity to play through his feelings. She spread the tables with corn meal and gave the children miniature dolls and animals to play with. Ralph buried a small plastic man announcing, "He's asleep with Jesus." Then he furiously pulled him out and announced, "No, he's not. He's here again." When Miss Allen suggested that maybe Ralph is terribly sad and a little bit mad that Grandpa went away and left him, Ralph was able to rebury the plastic man and leave him buried while he went off to do something else.

There are no recipes for teacher to follow in the case of a child disturbed by the death of a loved one. It is a terrible period of worry about who will take care of him. Sometimes a child even feels guilty that something he did caused the death. Teacher's role now is one of warm support and love. The child needs to feel wanted and cared for, and teacher can do this by showing that she understands his mixed-up feelings.

The child's behavior is bound to change at a time like this. He may whine when he speaks and cling to the teacher's skirt like a bashful child on the first day at school. Teacher should be alert to such clues. If they persist, she might talk with whoever is taking care of him at home about ways of showing him they care.

Divorce and Separation—When parents break up, the child always suffers in some way. He naturally feels a need to love both parents, and when they don't love one another any longer, he may feel he is being forced to choose between them. Some parents, in fact, purposely try to turn the child against one parent to keep him loyal to the other.

If a child knows that parents are going to live apart, and if he is assured that they both will continue to love him even though he will live with only one of them, it will help him get used to this new idea. The parent who keeps him should usually see that he sees the other parent regularly so that he can have confidence that both parents still care for him.

Again, if teacher is kept informed about the home situation, she can help the child during this unsettling time. Her steady affection will give him an anchor to hold on to while his home life is changing.

Prison—A separation of a different type, but equally upsetting for the child, occurs if one of his parents goes to jail. In addition to the worry about who will look after him during this time, he also may worry about the parent in jail, wondering when he will get out, why he has to be there. A child can still love a father dearly, even if the father has robbed a gas station. He may not understand why a grown-up has to be punished that way.

At this time the child needs teacher's protection to help him to feel safe.

A New Mother—Some child care children live with foster parents instead of their own parents. If a child has been with his foster mother as long as he can remember, he may love her as if she were his own mother. She is the one who takes care of him, and he needs her. If he is moved to another foster home or is adopted by another family, his feelings may be the same as if he lost his own mother.

A time like this is particularly frightening to a young child. Not only is he about to lose a mother whom he loves, but he is entering a strange situation that he knows nothing about. Although most adoptive parents are ready to open their hearts to their new child and love him as their own flesh and blood, a small child can not

know this. The uncertainty can cause worry that is likely to change his behavior.

A child emotionally upset like this may even appear to be ill. He might be pale and listless, or flushed and overexcited. He may lose his appetite, or sweat profusely, or urinate frequently. In many different ways his body is saying what his mouth may be unable to say, that he feels afraid and alone in a changing world.

when the child has been absent

Returning to the Center—Three-year-olds have short memories. A span of two weeks may seem like a lifetime for a young child. It is no wonder that some children act like strangers when they come back to the center after a lengthy absence.

Lori had been away for three weeks with a severe case of the flu. Even though she had been an active member of her group before she got sick, she came back acting like a terrified, speechless newcomer. It was two weeks before she began to speak, and several more before she was once again a contributing member.

Each child is a little different, but teacher can expect a certain amount of shyness in any child who has been away for a long time. If she treats him the same way she treats newcomers—keeping him close by, helping him to join in the activities, but remembering not to push too hard, showing him again how to build with blocks or paint a picture—he will soon become familiar again with the routine.

Reaction of Other Children—There is no reason why the other children who have been absorbed in their daily activities would remember the sick child who has been absent. Teacher can expect the others to act as they do when a newcomer joins the group. Some may respond with jealousy that teacher is paying extra attention to the re-

turned child. Others may simply become excited at the presence of a stranger. Singing games or action songs often help to calm unsettled feelings among the "regulars" and open an easy way for the returned child to begin again to participate with the group.

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Change is something everyone must live with. As much as we might want to shield a child from changes in his life, we cannot. The most we can do is help him face them realistically.

To start with, we must never assume that a child is too little to worry about what will happen to him. A child's biggest concern is who will

take care of him. When his life changes, his first thought is how he will be able to manage in the new situation.

If he knows that changes are about to take place and is made to understand that even though his life will be different, there will still be people who care about him and will look after him, he can accept the changes more easily. A teacher who understands how he feels and gives him strong, steady support while he is getting used to a new home, or new baby brother, or to life without someone he loves, helps prepare the child to meet later periods of trial without breaking down under the strain.

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